

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 TRSE-00 OPIC-03

MC-02 ACDA-05 OMB-01 SAM-01 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /088 W

----- 125762

R 111712Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7444

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 06235

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR' EIND, FR

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: AIR FRANCE AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

REF: PARIS 5280, PARIS 5281

1. SUMMARY: NO EVIDENCE YET THAT FOURCADE REMARKS ON AIR FRANCE AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT REPRESENT GOF POLICY. BOEING HAS QUIETLY MADE PRESENTATION TO AIR FRANCE ON PLANS FOR NEW 7X7 MEDIUM-RANGE TRANSPORT, CONCEIVED AS REPLACEMENT FOR 727 AND 737 IN EARLY EIGHTIES. IF FRENCH DECIDE MANUFACTURE "SUPER" MERCURE DERIVATIVE WITH CFM ENGINES FOR END THIS DECADE, IT MIGHT ALREADY BE OUTDATED BY LATER GENERATION 7X7. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FLURRY OF PRESS COMMENT TOUCHED OFF BY FINANCE MINISTER FOURCADE'S REMARKS ON AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT BY AIR FRANCE WAS SHORT-LIVED. POMPOUS EDITORIAL IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF THE TRADE WEEKLY AIR ET COSMOS ASSUMES ISSUE IS ALREADY SETTLED WITH
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THE GOF HAVING DEFINITELY DECIDED ON MERCURE FOR

REPLACEMENT OF ALL AIR FRANCE'S CARAVELLES AND WITH CHOICE BEING FOR "SUPER MERCURE" DERIVATIVE POWERED WITH CFM-56 ENGINES; BOTH CLAIMS WOULD APPEAR TO BE PREMATURE. MOST ENTERTAINING COMMENT IS PROVIDED, AS USUAL, BY LE CANARD ENCHAINE. WONDERING WHY FOURCADE WOULD PICK LOW-COST BISTROT LUNCH WITH JOURNALISTS SPECIALIZING IN CONSUMER PROBLEMS TO SOUND OFF RECKLESSLY ON AIR FRANCE AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT, LE CANARD SPECULATES THAT FOURCADE'S TONGUE MAY HAVE BEEN LOOSENED BY TOO MUCH WINE, AND AS FOR HIS MOTIVES IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, WELL, "THE SECRETS OF BACCHUS ARE IMPENETRABLE."

3. OFFICIAL IN DIRECTION DU BUDGET AT FINANCE MINISTRY TELLS US HE WAS AWARE OF NO STAFF WORK UNDERWAY WITHIN THAT MINISTRY ON AIR FRANCE PROCUREMENT POLICIES PRIOR FOURCADE REMARKS, THOUGH HE SUSPECTED THAT SOME OVERTIME MIGHT NOW HAVE TO BE DEVOTED TO THE QUESTION. CIVAIR OFFICIAL IN FOREIGN MINISTRY WHO SITS ON CONSEIL SUPERIEUR DE L'AVIATION MARCHANDE ALSO TOLD US THAT QUESTION OF AIR FRANCE FLEET RENEWAL HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED IN THAT BODY (WHICH HAD MET MOST RECENTLY LAST WEEK ON DAY PRIOR OUR CONVERSATION) THOUGH STRICTLY SPEAKING CONSEIL WOULD NOT FORMALLY DISCUSS ANYWAY UNLESS AND UNTIL CONFRONTED WITH AIR FRANCE REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO PURCHASE NEW AIRCRAFT.

4. LE POINT IN LAST WEEK'S ISSUE (ARTICLE POUCHÉ DEPT. AND COMMERCE) REPORTED THAT FOURCADE HAD, BEFORE HIS REMARKS, ACCEPTED INVITATION OF LONG DATE TO LUNCH WITH AIR FRANCETOP MANAGEMENT MARCH 17. IF LUNCHEON DOES TAKE PLACE PRESS WILL DOUBTLESS BE IN THE WINGS LOOKING FOR ANY FRESH STATEMENTS FROM EITHER FOURCADE OR AIR FRANCE.

5. AS THE QUESTION OF THE GOF'S EVENTUAL DECISION ON AIR FRANCE FLEET RENEWAL MARKS TIME, THERE HAS BEEN ANOTHER VERY INTERESTING YET QUIET DEVELOPMENT. ON MARCH 4 A BOEING TEAM MADE A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESENTATION TO AIR FRANCE IN PARIS ON BOEING'S PLANS FOR ITS NEW 7X7 SERIES OF JET TRANSPORTS. AS BOEING REP EXPLAINED TO US, CURRENT THINKING IS FOR A THREE ENGINE AIRCRAFT WITH RANGE OF ABOUT 2,000 NAUTICAL MILES AND CAPACITY OF ABOUT 185 PASSENGERS IN US STYLE CONFIGURATION OR UP TO 220 PASSENGERS IN EUROPEAN STYLE CONFIGURATION. CHOICE OF ENGINES WOULD BE OFFERED--EITHER PRATT AND WHITNEY JT-10 OR GE-SNECMA'S

CFM-56 PROVIDED LATTER COULD BE REDESIGNED TO
PROVIDE A FEW THOUSANDS POUNDS MORE THRUST. (REDESIGN
COULD SET THE CFM-56 PROGRAM BACK SEVERAL MONTHS, AS
WELL AS ANY SUPER-MERCURE PROGRAM USING CFM-56 ENGINE.)
CRUISING SPEED WOULD BE MACH 0.8. 7X7 WOULD REPRESENT
NO NEW BREAKTHROUGH IN AIRCRAFT DESIGN, BUT ALL ITS

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FEATURES WERE DIRECTED TOWARD FUEL ECONOMY. IT WAS
FORESEEN AS REPLACEMENT FOR 727'S AND 737'S. DEVELOP-
MENT WORK ON 7X7 WAS GOING FORWARD WITHOUT ANY
DEFINITE TARGET DATE HAVING BEEN SET; HOWEVER, AIM
WAS TO COMPLETE THE DEVELOPMENT WORK SO THAT BOEING
WOULD JUST HAVE TO "PUSH THE BUTTON" AND BE READY TO
GO IF AND WHEN DECISION TAKEN TO GO INTO
PRODUCTION. 1979-80 WAS CONSIDERED THE EARLIEST
POSSIBLE CERTIFICATION DATE. REFERRING TO ONGOING
PROJECT WHEREIN GROUP OF EUROPEAN CARRIERS (INCLUDING

AIR FRANCE, BRITISH AIRWAYS AND LUFTHANSA) WERE
SUPPOSED TO BE DRAWING UP SPECS FOR MEDIUM RANGE,
200 PASSENGER CAPACITY AIRCRAFT THAT EUROPEAN INDUSTRY
MIGHT THEN BUILD TO MEET CARRIERS' NEEDS, BOEING REP
SAID PROGRESS AMONG CARRIERS WAS DESULTORY: "BY THE
TIME OUR 7X7 PROTOTYPE ROLLS OUT, THE EUROPEANS WILL
BE STILL HAGGLING OVER WHAT COLOR THEY SHOULD PAINT
THEIR PLANE IF AND WHEN THEY EVER GET AROUND TO
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DECIDING TO BUILD ONE."

6. COMMENT: IT IS INDEED A BIT IRONIC THAT WHILE
DEBATE IN FRANCE CENTERS ON WHETHER AIR FRANCE SHOULD
BUY THE 737 OR THE MERCURE AS THE MODERN REPLACEMENT
FOR THE CARAVELLES, BOEING IS ALREADY LOOKING AHEAD
TO REPLACEMENT OF THE 737. AND THE NEW GENERATION
7X7 COULD COME ON THE MARKET AT THE SAME TIME AS THE
OLDER GENERATION MERCURE, ALBEIT IF IN A "SUPER",
CFM-56 POWERED VERSION. ONCE AGAIN, IT MIGHT BE
A QUESTION OF TOO LITTLE TOO LATE FOR FRENCH INDUSTRY,
AT LEAST ON THE EXPORT MARKETS IT WOULD
NEED IF A "SUPER MERCURE" IS NOT TO BE YET ANOTHER
FINANCIAL DISASTER.
RUSH

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